

*The Duty of a Minister to be a Pat-
tern of good Works.*

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SERMON

PREACHED before the

Particular SYNOD

OF

ARDMAGH,

ON

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Tit. 2. 7. *In all things shewing thy self
a Pattern of good Works.*

ST. Paul going else where as an Apostle, whose Ministry was not to be confin'd to any one particular place, to propagate the Gospel, left Titus, whom he styles *his own Son after the common Faith*, to set things in order in the Church of Crete. And that he might be the better qualified for such a piece of Service, he wrote him this Epistle, among many other things, directing him that he would, with all Authority, exhort the People committed to his Charge to their Duty, and reprove them for their Faults: And in the Text, that he would second his Reproofs and Exhortations with a lively and becoming Example in his own Person; *In all things shewing thy self a Pattern of good Works.*

The Point of Doctrine that natively offers itself to be cleared up and inculcated from these Words, without any Explication, is that Ministers should be Examples in good Works to their Flocks. It is what the Apostle here recommends to Titus, who, though it be disputed of what Order of the Ministry he was, is allowed by all to have been a Minister of some Order or other. And what he recommends to one Minister as such, he may be supposed to recommend to all. I shall in prosecuting this Subject,

I. Endeavour to shew what good Works are, and what it is to be a Pattern of them.

II. I will mention some of these good Works in which a Minister should be a Pattern to his Flock, and

III. I will shew the Reasonableness and Necessity of a Minister's being a Pattern of good Works.

1st. I am to shew, what *good Works* are, and what it is to be a Pattern of them; and I shall be but very brief on this Head, that I may have the more time for what I take to be of greater Importance at present.

The Phrase, *good Works*, is sometimes used in a very narrow and restricted sense in Scripture, for Charity to the Poor; as *1 Tim. 6. 17. charge them that are rich in this World, that they be rich in good Works; ready to communicate; willing to distribute, laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the time to come.* At other times it is to be understood in a much larger Sense, for every kind of good and virtuous Action, for *whatsoever things are true, honest, pure and virtuous, lovely and of good Report.* I need not mention Instances which every one will so easily remember of this Sense of the Phrase. The Words *in all things* make it plain, that this must be the Meaning of it in our Text. *In all things shewing they self a Pattern of good Works,* that is, being exemplary in Temper and Practice, in every thing that is good and virtuous in itself, or lovely and commendable in the sight of others.

Now to be a Pattern in this kind of Works, implies that a Man live in the Practice of them:

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For in what tolerable Propriety of speaking can one be said to be a Pattern of a thing when he does not the thing at all, or does it seldom? — It implies that he is eminent in good Works, and outstrips others: A Pattern supposes that the thing to which it is a Pattern, is not yet, but afterwards is to be made like it or equal to it. — And it implies, that a Man's good Works are evident and conspicuous to the World: For how else can they possibly be an Example; what *will it profit others that a Man light a Candle, if forthwith he hide it under a Busbel?*

We are always however to be very careful that we don't give reason to believe that we make our good Works visible out of Shew and Ostentation. For in as far as we do them with such a view, in so far Religion is lost out of our best Works: And in as far as Men imagine that this is our Spring of Action, in so far we lose our Design of being an Example to others: For as there is something too gross in Dissimulation to be long concealed from a discerning Eye, so there is nothing that the conscience of Good and Evil which God hath implanted in us, more abhors.

II. I now proceed to mention some of these kinds of good Works in which a Minister is to be a Pattern to his Flock.

But first it is of Importance to observe in general that he ought to be a Pattern to them in *all things*, according to the Text. In every thing, as has been said, that's good and virtuous in itself, and lovely and commendable in the sight of others. *The Man of God must be perfect, and thoroughly furnished to all good Works.* The Grace of God, of which he is a Preacher,

should mightily influence himself to *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in a present World.*

He should neglect no particular Action included in the two general Heads of Piety to God, and Love to his Neighbour: For this our Saviour has told us is *the Law and the Prophets*; and this indeed we may safely affirm is the *Gospel* too. These two Principles ought to animate him to his Duty in every Circumstance and Condition of Life. *As a Husband, he must be the Husband of one Wife, and nourish and cherish her as his own Flesh. As a Parent, he must not provoke his Children to Wrath, but train them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord. As a Master, he must give his Servants what is just and equal; and act to them in every respect as one that knows that his own Master is in Heaven, who is no Respector of Persons. As a Subject he must be-obedient to the higher Powers, praying for Kings and all that are in Authority, and submitting to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake. And as a Friend he must be faithful to the Interests and Secrets of his Friend, avoiding Peevishness, Ill-nature, and groundless Suspicions, or any thing else that may be of fatal tendency to interrupt the Friendship.*

In a word, a Minister, according to the Scriptures should be *blameless, the Husband of one Wife, vigilant, sober, of good Behaviour, given to Hospitality, apt to teach, not given to Wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy Lucre; but patient, not a Brawler, not covetous, one that ruleth well his own House, having his Children in Subjection with all Gravity, and not a Novice, lest being puffed up with Pride, he fall into the condemnation of the Devil.*

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I shall now be more particular about some of these good Works, in which a Minister ought to be a Pattern to his Flock.

1. He should be exemplary in all kinds of Charity to the Poor, and to every one in Distress. I mention this particularly, because, as has been observed already, this is what very often, and according to some, almost always goes by the name of good Works in Scripture. And People are apt to complain, that we lay heavy Burthens of this kind upon them; and indeed they have reason if we don't so much as *touch* them with a *Finger* of our own: But with what Face can they complain, if we bear, and are always the first and readiest to bear a part in them ourselves? Besides, he that is kind and beneficent to every Object of Compassion, is *the good Man*, for whom, according to the Scripture, *some would even peradventure dare to die*; How much more whom all would desire to hear, and be satisfied to be instructed by.

A Minister then, I say, should be rich in this kind of good Works, and be ready to communicate to all who are in Distress. Like good *Job* he should not *eat his Morsel alone*, but the *Fatherless* should be admitted to eat of it with him: And the *Loins of those that are naked* should bless him, because they are *cloathed with the Fleece of his Sheep*. He should never be known for any thing that is contrary to the Charity and Beneficence of a Christian: For *grinding the Face of the Poor*, and *causing the Eyes of the Widow to fail with vain Expectation of Relief*; or *for eating the Fruit of*

his Land *without Money*, or *withholding the Hire* of him that labours it for him. In short, as far as his Circumstances and a just regard to his own Family will permit, he should be *Eyes to the Blind*, and *Feet to the Lamé*, and a Friend and Father to that part of Mankind to which his Influence extends.

Wherefore is it then, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, that Men of our Order are so generally thought to be defective in this sort of good Works? To mention no other Instances of it, what can be the Reason that so few Ministers are careful to contribute their Proportion of the Publick Fund for the Support of Congregations that are not in a Capacity to support themselves, a neglect contrary to publick Faith and Justice, and contrary to all Bowels of Mercy and Compassion? And is it not very faulty in others, who are Men of Weight and Influence on account of their Age, Gravity, and other Ministerial Qualifications, that though they are punctual enough in performing their own parts, yet are at little pains to admonish the Negligent, and to lay Schemes to make what is so necessary to the Support of the dissenting Interest, more effectual for the future?

We are all zealous enough for what we take to be Truth; and we do well, for *it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing*. But here are noble Objects of our Zeal. The Honour of God in these Parts of our native Country, where almost nothing prevails but Ignorance, Superstition and Vice; the Comfort of our Brethren in the holy Ministry in these Congregations, many of them with numerous Families, who have little else for their Support: And the

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a Pattern of good Works.

eternal Well-being of many immortal Souls, who, if that Fund be allowed to sink, must probably perish for want of spiritual Food. God grant that it may never be laid to the Charge of any of us with our uncharitable Attachments to our particular Schemes, that don't much affect the Vitals of Religion, that we *strained at a Gnat, and swallowed a Camel*; and were punctual in *paying Tythe of Mint, Anise, and Cumine*, while the *weightier Matters of the Law, Justice, Mercy, and Faith were neglected*. I wish, I say, that this may never be laid to our Charge in that Day when the great Question will be, not how fiercely we have disputed; but what good we have done.

2d. Ministers should be Patterns in these good Works that seem harsh and difficult, and that Mankind discover the least Inclination to perform. There are some Duties of our holy Religion that will readily recommend themselves by their own Excellency and Worth, or into the Practice of which People will be easily led by Instruction and Advice. But there are others, that they are many times ready to lay aside all thoughts of, because there are strong Prejudices against them, or because they imagine there is something more requisite to the Performance of them than human Strength. In these things Ministers should be careful to set a good Example, and by a Chearfulness and Satisfaction in them to convince the blind World, that even in these, *Wisdom's ways are Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace*; and that the Power which God hath given us, together with that Assistance of *Grace* which he hath provided, are *sufficient for them*.

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But this Head would be defective, if I did not mention some of these Duties of the Christian Religion, that the World is apt to believe harsh and difficult, and beyond the reach of human Strength. Of this kind then is the Mortification of our Passions, Appetites, and inordinate Affections, which in the Scripture Language is as the *cutting off a right Hand, or plucking out a right Eye*. Such also are Patience, Contentedness, and Resignation to the Will of God; and loving our Enemies, and forgiving Injuries that have been done us. And such, lastly, is a Willingness to suffer Persecution, and even Death itself for Righteousness sake.

3d. Ministers should be Patterns of those good Works, in which the World seems to think them very defective: For let us cry up the dignity of our Office as we please, and call ourselves Ambassadors, and what not, whose Persons and Characters should be sacred, the World will prey into all our Actions, rip up all our Defects, and sometimes charge us with Faults, which it never so much as entred into our Thoughts to commit. I shall mention but two of these kinds of good Works, in which the World seem to think Ministers are wanting; those proceeding from a Christian Contempt of the World, and such as spring from a meek and merciful Temper of Mind. I dont know indeed that the Order of the Clergy are more chargeable, in the Lump, with the want of these than other men; I'm persuaded the Body of the reformed Clergy are not; and ours perhaps as little as any, for we have learned Contempt of the World by the want of it, and Moderation by suffering Hardships. But who does

does not know that the Bulk of Mankind pretend and strongly assert that they are, that so much as attends to their common Proverbs of the *Odium Theologorum*, the Hatred of Divines, and the Covetousness of the Church.

Nor ought we to be ignorant, because none but ourselves is likely to be so, of what's said on these Heads in Books lately published, and now greedily sought after, and actually in almost all Hands. According to these Books, the Causes of the present Contempt of the Clergy are their eternal Claims of worldly Power, their hunting for Honours and Preferments, and bustling after Riches. They say also, that Ministers are impatient of Contradiction, eager after Victory, and angry if their own Opinions do not prevail; that they are as great Enemies to Mercy as they are to Reason, having perverted Religion into Rage, Zeal into Cruelty, and the peaceable Doctrine of the Gospel into a Doctrine of Blood. And that, when they can get nothing else to murder for Conscience sake, they'll take Care to murder one another, in their Usefulness and Reputation. These are Imputations upon Ministers, that I wish, none of them had ever deserved; and that, I'm sure, all of us should study to take off, not by Arguments and Writing; but, in a way that will prove abundantly more effectual, by our good Tempers and Lives. The People indeed need not expect, that the original Dispositions, from which those things proceed, will be wholly rooted out. Would they for instance have us *worse than Infidels*, because we are Ministers, not to *take Care of those of our own House*? Or can it be thought that these Passions, that our Maker hath implanted in Mankind, for their defence against Injuries, will

will not be sometimes exerted, in Men of like Passions with others?

But we should surely upon this very Account, were there nothing else in the World to engage us, more than ever cease to be troubled about many things, and mind the one thing needful to ourselves, and to our Flocks, *that good Part which will never be taken away from either*; and more than ever study *that Wisdom which is from above, which is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and of good Fruits*. For can we ever think, that the greater part of our People will walk in this Way, if we do not go before them in it? Will they be Followers of of him, who was *meek and lowly of Spirit*, if our own Behaviour any way favour of him, who is the great Enemy of Mankind; *and was a Murderer from the Beginning*? Or will we be able to persuade them, *that Godliness with Contentment, is great Gain*, by our Sermons, if *Gain without Contentment*, appears to be instead of *Godliness* to ourselves? And will the whole World, and our being able to bring all Mankind to our Call, so as to tread on the Necks of Emperors and Kings, as some Clergymen have presumed to do, will all this, I say, be well gained at the Expence of one Soul, led aside and ruined by our pernicious Example?

4. A Minister should be an Example to his Flock in Zeal for God, and for the Interests of his Kingdom in the World. This, the Importance of Religion loudly calls for from us; that is, the Honour of God, the present Welfare of Mankind, and the future Happiness of immortal Souls. Without this, the End of all we do as Christians, Acceptance with God cannot be obtained;

tained; because *thou art neither cold nor hot*, says our blessed Saviour to the *Laodiceans*, that is art not zealous but luke-warm, *I will spew thee out of my Mouth*. And Zeal is eminently recommended to us by the Example of one, whom Ministers need neither be afraid nor ashamed to imitate, our Lord Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd of the Sheep. How ardent was his Love of Souls, how keen his Resentment against Sin, upon all Occasions?—What Tears did he shed for the Hardness of Peoples Hearts. And how was he, as it were, *eaten up with the Zeal of his Father's House*?

Zeal then is a Temper of Mind, of great Importance to the well-being of the Christian Religion, in which therefore, without Question, a Minister ought always to be careful to set a good Example. And more especially there is a Demand for it at present, when *the perilous times are come, in which the Love of many is waxen cold*: When not only practical Godliness is at a low Ebb, but also our Holy Religion itself, hath been openly and formidably attacked by some, while others of great Name, have given several unhappy Strokes from the Press, at the great Anchor of a Christian's Hope, the Doctrine of Christ's being a *Propitiation for the Sins of his People*, than which I don't know, if there be many of greater Importance in the whole Christian Scheme. At such a time, *for Sion's sake we should not hold our Peace, and for Jerusalem's sake, we should not rest till the Righteousness thereof go forth as Brightness, and the Salvation thereof, as a Lamp that burneth*.

But since the Word Zeal, is sometimes taken in a bad Sense in Scripture, and since very bad Tempers, and very destructive to the Interests of Mankind, have been sometime hallowed with the Name

Name of Zeal, it will be necessary, that I briefly explain that Temper of Mind, which I would here be understood to recommend. Now, there is a certain kind of false Zeal hinted at under the foregoing Head, in which, the World will tell us, there is no great Danger, that Ministers will be wanting. That Zeal is intemperate in its Degree, terrible in its Consequences, and almost always concerning small and trivial Matters. There has been a great deal of this false Zeal in the Christian Church, and the Clergy to be sure, have always had their Share in it. In every age they have been burning and strangling, or if that was not in their Power, making Hereticks of, and excommunicating one another: And all for the most part, about Matters of doubtful Disputation, when both Parties, had it not been for their Zeal and other Vices, might have been acceptable to God: I say, had it not been for their Zeal, might have been acceptable to God: For can we ever believe, that such a temper will be agreeable to that wisest, and best of Beings; who, as he has no Passion nor wrong Affection himself, so with Respect to us, can easily separate true Zeal from every Mixture of any corrupt Passion of our own. But not such is the Zeal of a true Christian; of which a Minister should shew himself a Pattern.

It is peaceable and gentle, and like true Faith, it works by Love. *The Servant of the Lord*, however zealous he is, *must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, in Meekness instructing such as oppose themselves, if peradventure, God may give them Repentance, to the acknowledgment of the Truth.*

It knows no undue Methods for opposing Error, and defending or propagating Truth; and never descends to the use of any other Weapons.
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than those of fair Argument and Persuasion. And if at any time it meets with a fundamental Error, obstinately and contumaciously adhered to, its greatest Stretch is not to have any unnecessary Communication with the Person who maintains it, *not to bid him God Speed*, or suffer him to come into the House where it resides.

It never hates the Persons of Men, but their Vices, and the impious Doctrines they profess. So far from this, that when it finds itself obliged to withdraw from obstinate Sinners and Unbelievers, it has sincere Compassion on them, and ceases not to pray for them, and to use all possible Methods to reclaim them.

And finally, true Zeal always bears a Proportion to the Value of Things about which it is exercised. It is not eager and warm about matters of little Moment, and cold and indifferent about Things of the greatest Importance. *It makes a Difference, having Compassion on some, and saving others, with Fear pulling them out of the Fire.* And it is always, at least as much levelled against the Violation of any Law of the Gospel as against bad Principles; knowing that Principle and Practice are to one another as Means to an End, and that the former can never be of a greater Value than the latter.

5th. Moderation is another good Work in which a Minister should be a Pattern to his Flock. To be thus, is not to be a Man of no Principles, as some are pleased to speak, or to be easy what Principles prevail in the World. These that are of this Opinion concerning their Neighbours, would do well to remember that they take upon them to judge, what God only is the Searcher of, the Hearts and Consciences of Men; and pass a Sen-

Sentence that I doubt not but in many Instances, these severe Judges will have the Pleasure to see reversed in that Day, in which God will bring forth the Righteousness of his Servants as the Light, and their Judgment as the Noon-Day.

But to pass this. There is no Duty of our Holy Religion that is more frequently inculcated or more strongly enforced, and therefore that appears to be of greater Consequence than Moderation. *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men*, says the Apostle, *the Lord is at Hand*, that is, the Time hastens apace, in which God will plead for himself, let therefore your Christian Forbearance and Gentleness of Temper be evident to all with whom ye converse. And in another Place, he recommends it to such as are *strong in the Faith to bear the Infirmities of the Weak, and not please themselves*; as if he had said, they who have made greater Progress in the Knowledge of divine Truth, should tolerate in the Church, and treat as Brethren their weaker Fellow-Christians, and not so far indulge their own ill Nature and false Zeal, as to deny them, what notwithstanding their Weakness, they have a just Title to, the Communion of the Faithful. And that the *Roman* Converts to whom he writes, and not only they, but all Christians, might be wrought up to such an amiable Temper of Mind; he reasons with them thro' the whole of that Context in the strongest and most affectionate Manner. Particularly he sets before them that *the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink*, small and circumstantial Matters, but things of more weighty Concern, *Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*: And shows them the detestable Consequences of the contrary Behaviour; such as, not to forbear a weaker Christian in a circum-

circumstantial Error, was to invade the Prerogative of God, *to judge another Man's Servant, and to destroy him for whom Christ died.*

It is indeed true that in his Epistle to the *Galatians* he is sometimes very severe against false Teachers of one Party in that Debate between Jews and Gentiles, in which he else where so much pleads for Toleration on both Sides. But this is so far from weakning that it confirms the Necessity of Moderation. For, Want of Moderation was the very Thing for which these false Teachers were condemned, that they would have the Ceremonies of the Law imposed upon all Christians as Things necessary to Salvation; and not that they simply differed in their Sentiments from their Brethren: For in other Places of the same Epistle, he warmly recommends it to both Parties that they would *in Love serve one another*, and that they would not *bite and devour one another, lest they should be consumed one of another.*

But Time would fail to consider all the Passages in the New Testament in which Moderation and Forbearance are enjoined. Just only then to mention one or two more, we are commanded to *forbear one another in all Lowliness and Meekness, and to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace: to put away all Bitterness, Wrath Anger, Clamour, and evil speaking, and to put on as the Elect of God, Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, being kind and tender hearted and forgiving one another, as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven us.*

That these Precepts concerning Charity and Moderation were not only calculated for the Dis-

ference between Jews and Gentiles about the Ceremonial Law, but were design'd to extend to all Debates of the like Kind that might happen in the Church, will appear if we attend to the Reasonableness of the Thing itself.

Without Forbearance and Moderation the Peace of the Church can never be effectually secured. There are but two Ways proposed as far as I know, for obtaining that desirable End: either that there should be a perfect Unanimity amongst Christians in Matters of Faith, or that they should forbear one another in Things of lesser Importance. The first of these is never to be expected while we are in our present imperfect State, where there are such different Capacities among Men, such various Ways of obtaining Knowledge, and such a vast Diversity of Prejudices, arising from Education and other Circumstances in which God in his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, hath thought fit to place us: And as this must be the Case, so there hath actually been in all Ages, considerable Diversity of Sentiments among confessedly great and good Men. Need I stay to prove this to those that hear me? I'm perswaded *I need not*. Who does not remember the Difference between *Luther* and *Calvin* about the real Presence of Christ's *Body* and *Blood* in the Lord's Supper? Or that between *Hooper* and *Ridley*, both of them afterwards Martyrs for Christ, about the Use of the Popish Vestments? Or to mention a later Instance, that between Mr. *Cumine*, and some that adhered to him, on the one side; and the rest of the *London* subscribing Ministers, on the other, about the
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eternal Generation of the Son of God? Since then there must be, and actually in all Ages hath been Diversity of Sentiments among Christians, it follows that the Peace of the Church can only be effectually secured on the foot of Toleration.

Moderation and Forbearance are also the most probable methods to reclaim such as go astray, and on the other Hand Ill-nature and Compulsion are no less likely to prevent this. For by condemning weaker Christians, and shutting them out from our Communion, we fill them with Prejudices against us, and make them suspicious of every Thing we have to say. But if we forbear them and treat them as fellow Christians, they will look upon us as their Friends, and be readier to hear and consider what we have to propose for their Conviction. Add to this, that want of Moderation, tho' it never causes a real Change of Opinion on the other Side, yet it may be, and often has been the Cause of Hypocrisy and Dissimulation: Men may to avoid sufferings, or to procure and preserve the good Opinion of others, not only conceal the real Sentiments of their Hearts, but act contrary to them, which is a great Disgrace to human Nature, and especially to the Ministers of Truth; but it is all rank Prevarication, and when once the Force is taken off, and they are at Liberty to speak and act as they think proper, they'll be of the old Opinion again, if by a long course of Dissimulation they are not become easy of what Opinion they are.

To conclude the Proof of this Head; when we refuse to tolerate a weaker Christian in what

we take to be a circumstantial Error, what absolute Certainty have we that we are not suppressing Truth and so fighting against God? Who can say, I am absolutely clean from Error in Judgment more than Error in Practice: And if we are liable to Error in some Points why not in this as well as in another? Besides, we plead Scripture and Reason for our Opinion, and so do they for theirs; we allege that they pervert Scripture and Reason, and they pretend that we do the same, and where is the visible infallible Judge to decide between us? And if we have a Right to cast them out of our Communion, they have just as good a Right, if they be stronger, to cast us out of theirs; and so there will be as many distinct Communications as there are different Opinions, that is, at least, as there are Scores of intelligent Persons in the World.

It is objected that this Forbearance which I have been pleading for, will occasion Confusion, as it is probable that Ministers of different Sentiments will sometimes contradict one another, when they preach occasionally in one another's Pulpit.

I answer, if this Objection proves any thing it proves too much; — For if Ministers differ about any one Point they may sometimes come to clash when they preach in the same Pulpit: And yet will any one that hears me assert, that there is no one Point in which a Minister who differs from his Brethren may be forborne; It ought also to be consider'd, that few or no Instances can be given in which the like has happened: Nor is it likely to happen often, since at Sacrament,

ment Occasions, the only ones almost when Ministers are employ'd in one another's Pulpits, they are not usually doctrinal, but practical Points that are insisted on. Or if they are at all Doctrines, they are the fundamental and important ones, of our blessed Saviour's Death and Propitiation for Sins, his Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, in which all must be agreed, or otherwise there can be no Communion. But should this Case happen never so often, the bad Effects of it might be easily prevented, if as often as Ministers preach on Matters of Faith that are not very important, they would briefly recite the contrary Opinion, and having modestly confuted it, they would inform their Audience that they did not look upon their Doctrine to be essential, however useful it might be, and that Charity to those of the opposite Sentiment should be maintained.*

But it is more than time that I should proceed to the

III^d Thing proposed, which was to consider the Reasonableness and Necessity of a Minister's being a Pattern of good Works.

— And there are several Reasons for it than which there can't well be greater for any Practice.

1st. The Practice of good Works, in the large Sense of the Phrase, is the End of all they do as Ministers of Christ. That must be the End of all their Ministrations, which was the End of every Part of the Human Frame and Constitution before the Fall, and of every Revela-

* Here followed a pretty long account of fundamental Articles, which I now leave out lest this Discourse should well to too great a Bulk.

lation of himself which God has from time to time given the World. But such is the Practice of good Works among Mankind, or the Discharge of every Part of our Duty to God and to one another : Especially this was the Design of the Christian Revelation. It was one main End of Christ's Death, as Attonement for Sin was another, *Tit. 2. 14. He gave himself for us, not only that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, but that he might purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.* This was the design both of the Gospel in general, and of every particular Precept of it. Of the Gospel in general ; *Tit. 2. 11, 12. The Grace of God, that is the Gospel, that bringeth Salvation appeared unto all Men, teaching us that denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.* And of every particular Precept of it : *The End of every such Precept or Commandment is Charity, the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, out of a pure Heart and a good Conscience, and of Faith unfeigned, that is in other Words, the Practice of good Works : For what is the Love of God, but to keep his Commandments ? Or is it the Love of our Neighbour, to say be ye warmed and be ye filled without giving them those things that are necessary to the Body ?*

To which I may farther add that this is the End of all the Doctrines of the Gospel as well as of its Precepts. Our holy Religion knows no purely speculative Principles ; Principles that are to be believed only for their own Sakes. No : each of its Doctrines has more or less, some Influence upon the Christian Temper and Practice, as might be easily made out by considering

dering them in particular, would our Time allow. And this is the Reason that Charity is preferr'd to Faith, that the one is the End and the other the Mean, and the End must be preferable to the Mean, 1 Cor. 13. 13. *Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, and the greatest of these is Charity.*

2d. A great part of their Flock is likely to follow their Example when Ministers are Patterns of good Works. The Example of any Man, whose Wisdom and Integrity can be depended on, is ready to be followed by his Neighbours, especially the meaner Sort who have seldom Capacity as they have neither Time nor any great Desire to form a Judgment for themselves; and therefore to supply this Defect have implanted in them an Inclination to follow the Example of others. Of what mighty Influence is the Counsel of such a one, and what's his Example but a continued Counsel; and with this Advantage that whereas Counsel spends itself at once, or grows weary by being despised, Example abides, and draws the stronger that it draws insensibly, and by easy imperceptible Degrees? Thus do we not frequently observe in Fact that men are apt to fall into the Manners and Customs, the Sentiments and Opinions, and even the very Airs and Gestures of those with whom they converse: especially if they love or fear them, would obtain their Friendship, or avoid their Indignation and Resentment, or can depend upon their Integrity and Judgment?

Now whose Example will Mankind be readier to follow, because whom should they more love or fear, and whose Honesty and Wisdom, one would think, can be more depended on, than those whom the Holy Scripture, by way of Eminence, stile *Men of God, and Servants of*

the Lord? Men that have had a learned and Christian Education in their Youth, who have the Holy Scripture, the Rule of Right and Wrong in their Hands, and who so frequently distribute to others, and themselves partake of the sacred Symbols of Christ's Body and Blood, and so frequently converse with the Sick, weak, and scrupulous of their charge about the things of Religion and another world, who, I say, one would think, so ready to be imitated as these Men?

On the one Hand true Goodness when exemplified in such a Person's Practice and attended with *the Peace of those who Love the Law of the Lord*, which cannot but be visible to the World, must powerfully recommend it self to all Spectators who are not wholly lost to every Thing that is good and sacred, and must be admired by even its Enemies themselves. *The Light* which has so many Charms of its own, wants only to be thus seen and thus *shine among Men* to excite many to desire to be sharers in it, that they *may glorify our Father which is in Heaven*. On the other Hand, can we ever believe that the greater Part of our People little accustomed to Reflection, will take our Advice, or give much Heed to our Sermons when they see our selves running on in those Vices which our Doctrine has a Tendency to restrain? Will they regard much what we say about another World, and the reasonableness of preferring it to this one, if they behold us taking another Way? Rather, on the contrary, since they are so apt to grasp at every thing that may sooth the Checks of their Consciences and encourage them to go on in a Way that is agreeable to their Inclinations, will they not follow our Example, because
they

they think it safe, as we our selves seem to do; ⁵ and despise our Doctrines as Words of course, certain Cant-Words, as some are not ashamed to speak, invented by the Clergy at first, and still industriously propagated by us to serve our Ends?

3. It will give a mighty Weight to a Minister's Sermons that he himself be a Man of an holy exemplary Life. The more a Man is esteem'd by his Hearers, the greater Influence he is likely to have upon them, and the more good he is likely to do them by his Discourses. Thus have we not seen an Audience, in the deepest Attention to a Preacher, who has been so fortunate as to get into their good liking; and the very next Hour as good Things, and perhaps better received with great Coldness and Indifferency, by the very same Audience from another? Now what can have a greater Tendency to procure the Good-liking and Esteem of any Audience to their Minister than his being a Man of an holy Life? True Virtue exemplified in him, and shining forth in every Part of his Conversation, cannot fail to attract the Esteem and Veneration of all Lovers of Goodness, and even of those who have renounced it.

Again, that Sermon is likely to be of most Weight with a Congregation, that a Minister delivers with a feeling of it in his own Heart. But how can he feel in his Heart what he is an utter Stranger to in his Life and Conversation? I would not indeed, be thought to tie down the Edification of a Congregation to the Preacher's Intention, his Temper and Behaviour; there being no Reason, why Truth which be-
longs

longs to the Understanding should lose its Nature and Influence ; on account of the moral Defects of him who proposes it. Yet I can never think, that the Blessing of Heaven so often attends the Administrations of wicked Men, who neither feel nor care what they speak. Besides, with what Face can a Minister reprove a Hearer for his Faults, when the Hearer knows that he is guilty of the same or as great Faults himself? How can he say to the other, *let me pull out the Mote that is in thine Eye, while a Beam is in his own Eye?* And must he not be very *inexcusable*, whoever he be, a Minister no less than others, who *judgeth another*, and thereby *condemneth himself*, he that *judgeth doing the same things?*

I must beg your Patience, till I show in a few Words from these Principles that have been laid down, that a Minister, as he regards the Honour of God, the Credit of his particular Profession, the Benefit of his Hearers, or his own future Happiness, should shew himself a Pattern of good Works.

The Honour of God loudly demands that a Minister should be of an holy unblameable Life, Not to mention his own amiable Perfections, which render him the Object of our highest Love and Esteem, and those daily Benefits with which he every Day plenteously loads us, both as Men and Christians, not I say, to insist on these Things, we ought to honour him because he has honoured us by putting this Ministry of Reconciliation into our Hands. We ought not indeed to cry up the Dignity of our Office, with a Design to aggrandize the Person who bears it :
But

But it is both lawful and commendable to think highly of it, when we make it a Motive to Gratitude to him who gave it. Now it is a native Consequence of our highly honouring and esteeming any Person, that we desire he should be honoured and esteemed by others as well as our selves, and to this End shew a constant Defe-
rence and Regard to him in their Presence when any Opportunity offers. And hereby actually is our *heavenly Father glorified*, that we, and others after our Example *bring forth much Fruit.* *John 15. 8.* It is then, and only then, that we gain that Honour to the Name of God which is so justly due to him from all Mankind, when we become like him in our Tempers and Lives.

The Credit of our particular Profession is no less concerned in Ministers and their People's being righteous and good Men. It were to be wished, indeed, that there were no such particular distinguishing Professions among Christians; and as there is *but one Shepherd* there might be *but one Sheep-Fold*. But as these Things must be, while we know but in Part, 'tis but natural that every Man should study the Credit of that particular Society to which he belongs: And surely the best Way for us to promote that, is to be holy and exemplary in our Lives, By outstripping others in doing good, and setting noble Examples of Piety, Justice, Humanity to the World. For the greater Part of Mankind judge of the Goodness or Badness of any Profession, more by the Tempers and Lives of those that adhere to it, than by the Evidences that there are for the Truth or Fals-

Falshood of its distinguishing Principles, which generally speaking they have neither Capacity nor Leisure to examine.

Ministers should also be careful to be Patterns of good Works, as they regard the Happiness of their fellow Creatures, particularly their own Congregations, and especially as they prize the final Happiness of their precious Souls. We are most solemnly bound by a Multitude of Obligations, to abstain from every Thing that has any Tendency to be pernicious to them, and to do them every Piece of Service in our Power. And there is nothing by which we can propose to be more useful to them, not even by our preaching it self, than by setting them a good Example; and thereby cultivating in their Minds an high Regard to God and Goodness, and so making them lovely in themselves, useful to those with whom they converse, and Friends and Favourites of the Father of their Spirits, in whom their Happiness consists. And is it not a great Pity that the divine Soul of Man that is made after the Image of God, and qualified for Communion and Friendship with him for ever, should be so *laden with thick Clay* as it commonly is, so as not to be able to *look up*. ——— And what *shall a Man get in Exchange for his Soul* if it be lost! or *what will it profit him if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* And how will we be able to answer for it, at that awful Bar where we must all soon stand, if one Soul committed to our Charge, shall be lost for want of our warning it of its Danger, or setting it a good Example?

Finally, as we prize our own Happiness, especially our Happiness in a future State, we should all of us be careful to set a good Example to our Congregations. In general we are told that all *who by patient Continuance in well doing, look for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, shall receive eternal Life.* And in particular, that *when the chief Shepherd shall appear, the good Shepherds, that have been Examples to the Flock, shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.* And it is reasonable to expect that this should be the Case: For, whether the Happiness of good Men in Heaven will result from the good Temper which they will bring along with them, which cannot but be happy; must not the Temper be the better, and consequently the Happiness the greater, the more good we have done? Or whether we conceive it as coming by Way of Reward from a righteous Judge; on whom do we think, will such a Judge bestow a greater Reward, than on the Man who has done him the best and most faithful Service in this World?

Yea we are in some Measure able to conceive wherein the greater Happiness of those Men will consist, who by their Sermons and good Examples shall be made the happy Instruments of gaining Souls to Christ. For besides the Joy and Satisfaction that must arise from a Remembrance of having been Fellow-workers with God in making the World happy; besides this, with what unspeakable Pleasure may we suppose these Men will receive the Praise and Thanks of those whom God shall make them the blessed Means of bringing to Salvation; And behold not only them

them but their Children, and their Childrens Children to many Generations, who were influenc'd by their good Example, as they by that of their Minister, to see all these *rising up and calling them blessed*? I would not willingly fully such a Thought as this, by bringing to your Remembrance the dismal final Consequences of another Behaviour. I hope your *pure Minds* need not be stirred up to your Duty by such a Motive; only let us all remember, that instead of these unspeakably joyful Intercourses, the Loads of Curses that will be laid upon Ministers of bad Lives, in another World, for the ill Influences that their Example had upon their People, will be enough, were there no more, to make them unhappy.

From what has been said, let us all be afraid, by our bad Lives and Actions of any Kind, to offend any of these *little ones committed to our Charge*: For Woe will be to us, if we do, *it were better that a Mill-stone were hanged about our Necks, and we cast into the midst of the Sea*. On the contrary, let us adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things, by our holy Lives; let us in all Things shew our selves a *Pattern of good Works*, to our Congregations, and add a becoming Example to the faithful Discharge of all other Parts of our Office: And so shall we both save our selves and them that hear us. 'Tis true we may expect to meet with Discouragements in the Prosecution of this our Work: Yet in this Way we have no Reason to faint, *in due time we shall reap if we faint not*. We serve a good Master, who will support us under our Discouragements, and will by no means for-

a Pattern of good Works.

31

forget our *Patience and Labour of Love*. And if we lose any Thing in his Service, the Loss will be abundantly made up: *In this Life we shall receive an hundred fold, and in the World to come eternal Life.*

And you my Friends of the Christian People, learn to prize a Minister, when you have one, that will be a Pattern of good Works. There are divers other Things that may engage the Affections of a People to their Minister at first, such as shining Gifts and the like; but believe me, these will soon grow familiar, and lose their Influence, and this only, together with useful edifying Preaching will be a lasting Fund of Esteem and Respect. Nor should you imagine that Ministers alone are concerned to be Examples to others. You likewise are commanded to *consider one another, to provoke to Love and good Works*. Nor will you miss of your Reward if you do: The Man, whoever he be, that turns many to Righteousness, by Example and other means of Instruction *shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.*

But particularly let us all, both Ministers and People, lay aside our senseless Debates among our selves and *maintain the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. Whereto we have already attained, *let us all walk by the same Rule, and mind the same things*: And if any of us be otherways minded, let us wait in the way of our Duty till God shall reveal it. Let us keep what our Lord Jesus Christ hath left us Peace, and transmit it through our hands intire and unbroken to succeeding Generations.

Will

Will we not highly prize, and constantly make use of such a valuable Legacy bequeath'd by so good a Friend. *Peace, says he I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you; not as the World giveth so give I.*

Let us disappoint the Fears of those that wish us well. And if there are any so ill natur'd as to desire that we should hurt and ruin our selves by our Divisions, let us disappoint their Hopes. It is not to be deny'd, it is already intirely publish'd, and People are impatiently waiting the Issue, that the ^{disputing} cause, in this part of the World is again upon the Brink of Ruine. But let us all deeply weigh the Consequences of what we are about, before we proceed: And if we find that they will be destructive to the Interests of pure and undefiled Religion, as I'm perswaded we will, let us not venture any farther. But is our Judgment so near as is given out; and where are the previous Steps that should have been taken? Where is that Restoring in *the Spirit of Meekness* that the Gospel enjoins? I shall not say what else we have seen, but I'm sure we have seen little Meekness little Instruction. And will we venture to go on till these methods have been again and again us'd? Will any man dare, without the utmost effects to prevent it, to proceed to give the finishing Stroke to this Church, whose Union, to use her own Words, hath till very lately been her *Security and Glory*: But we had best forbear that Contention before it be meddled with: For the Beginning of it will be *as when one letteth out Water*, and the Breach will grow wide as the Sea, so that none can heal it.

Let

Let not Protestant Dissenters fall in with these Methods of Oppression under which the Dissenting Interest hath so long groan'd. One Part of them indeed, I mean Halters and Whips, are not in our Hands; and we have Reason to bless God for it: For notwithstanding all that our Forefathers have suffered by them, we are perhaps not the People with whom these Instruments of Punishment might be trusted. However let us shew that we are, by our not unduly using the Instruments of Oppression which we have in our Power. Let us not excommunicate one another; or if we don't find ourselves strong enough for this, let us not, which is the same thing, withdraw from one another; but let us live together in Peace and Love.

And let us all cordially join together in Defence of our common Christianity, and in promoting practical Religion. Here will be a large enough Field for the Exercise of our Zeal. And is it a time for us to spend our strength in defending the out-works, and out-works that indeed are not attack'd, when the Fort it self is openly and formidably beset? And let us join together in rectifying any thing that may be amiss among our selves. *Cursed is he that will not help in this Work of the Lord: If any Man refuse his hand may it forget its cunning, or his Tongue may it cleave to the Roof of his Mouth.*

And no Question there are Things amiss among us that stand in need to be reformed. I must mention one, and thus publicly bear Testimony against it. I'm afraid that in too many Sermons, the Duties of the second take Place of, and juggle out those of the first Table of the Law: And that we are indeed in

some danger of losing our Love to God, by our Charity to Men.* I could also wish to see a plain practical way of preaching more in use than it is.

To have our discourses wholly made up of abstract reasoning is to defeat one great end for which the Gospel was given, which was that People of little leisure and capacity might be taught their Duty to God and one another, and whatever else is necessary to their Happiness in an easy familiar way. And it is to overlook the weak and ignorant that is commonly the greater part of our Congregations, whose Souls are as precious in the Sight of God as the Souls of others. But if we set about rectifying this and the like Disorders, let us always be sure that we do it in a Christian way. Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, let us restore him in a Spirit of Meekness.

Let us never proceed to Rigour till after repeated Admonitions, and when we do, let it be with Reluctancy and strong Compassion.

The Sum of the whole is, that if there are any differences among us about Things that are not essential we ought to forbear one another, and study the *Things which make for Peace, and wherewith one may edify another*. I must yet beg a Minute or two, till I endeavour to persuade you and my self to this, and oh that I could find out acceptable Words to do it with : Words that

* I'm sensible, on the other hand, that with too many the Duties of the first not only take place of, as they ought, but also juggle out those of the second Table. I am also sensible that it is only young Gentlemen of the best Sense, when upon their tryals, or for a little time after it, that give occasion for the complaint above: who very soon after, for the most fall into a plain practical way of Preaching.

that would sink deep into the Heart of every one that hears me and my own.

Consider that hereby we will testify to the World that the same Mind is in us that was in Christ Jesus, our worthy High Priest, *who can be touch'd with a feeling of the Infirmities of his People, and have Compassion on the Ignorant and those that are out of the way.* And that we are followers of them that were at first employ'd in propogating the Gospel, who did it *by long suffering, by Kindness, by the holy Ghost, by Love unfeigned, by the Armour of Righteousness on the right hand and on the left.*

Without this we shall not be able to recover, and to keep up the Credit of our Profession. What are we, at present, but a broken and disjointed Body, dwindling daily more and more into Factions, without Interest, and without Weight. And will it not be our eternal Disgrace, that, at a time when all the rest of Mankind seem dispos'd to Moderation, we can't think to suffer one another to live? That we who are Members of the same glorious Head, Professors of the same Faith and Baptism, and I hope fellow Heirs of the same *Inheritance with the Saints in Light*, can't agree to forbear one another in Love. And that there should be such Alienations of Affections among Christian Friends and Brethren, who formerly *took sweet Counsel together*; and all about a different Thought upon a Subject, a different Explication of a Text of Scripture, when both Sides are consistent enough with the Analogy of Faith. Let not the common Enemy hear of this, *She who sits as God in the House of God, and in the Skirts of whose Garments the Blood of the Saints is found.* Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the Streets of Askelon.

Are we indeed Christians, as we profess, and why will we forward the Cause of Infidelity with our Division. It is well known that it is the favourite Objection of our Modern Deists against the Christian Religion that it has no suitable effect upon those who profess it. And particularly that those who shou'd know it best, and upon whom it should have the greatest Influence, are generally factious quarrelsome Men, and Men of no Bowels nor Mercies. With this Objection they gave the onset, and by means of it, and some others, they have been able to carry the Cause of Infidelity to such a height as to subvert the Faith of Thousands. Let us take care to wrest this Weapon out of their Hands for the future. *Let us shew them that Christ crucified is to as many as believe on him Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God: And that his Religion is indeed that Wisdom that is from above which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, and full of Mercy and of good Fruits.*

To conclude, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, let us all call to mind the late melancholy Scene of Confusion in this part of the Church, and see if we can have the Heart to act it over again. Shall we again sound Alarm upon Alarm against one another, from the Pulpit, and from the Press: And again in some Measure desert our own Congregations, and spend our time and strength in invading and making encroachments upon one another? Blessed Jesus! *will our Hearts endure, and our Hands be made strong to go through with all this wicked drudgery in the day which God shall deal thus with us.* And is there indeed no Help? Is there
there

there no *Balm* in *Gilead*, is there no *Physician* there ?
Let the *Peace-makers* step in. *Blessed* are the
Peace-makers. Yea doubly blessed shall they
be who will *heal* the *Breaches* of *Zion*.

And when human *Strength* and *Wisdom* will
be of no avail, come in thy self to our *Aid*, O
blessed *Jesus*, thou *Prince* of *Peace*. Let thy
Servants no more incline to *beat* their *Fellow*
Servants : Thy *Sheep* no more like *Wolves*
tear and worry one another : And thy *Holy*
Religion no longer be *wounded* in the *House* of
its Friends. *Arise* O glorious *Lord* and *have*
Mercy upon thy *Zion*. Let the time to *favour*
her *speedily* come. And let thy *Servants* take
Pleasure in her *Stones*, and *favour* the *Dust*
thereof.

F I N I S.





